

DebraLee Hovey

Biography

State Representative DebraLee Hovey is a conscientious legislator who takes pride in her commitment to constituent service, to her role as a voice for the towns of Monroe and Newtown at the State Capitol, and to her work on behalf of policies that encourage economic growth and job creation in Connecticut.

Recognizing Representative Hovey for her leadership qualities and her record of achievement during her first term in the state legislature, House Minority Leader Robert M. Ward, R-86th District, appointed her as House Ranking Member on the General Assembly's Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee for the 2005 and 2006 legislative sessions.

All nominations for appointments to state boards, commissions, agencies and departments that require action by the General Assembly, (with the exception of judicial nominations and nominations of workers' compensation commissioners) are referred to the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee before being acted upon by the state Senate and the state House of Representatives.

As the committee's House Ranking Member (Republican leader), Representative Hovey works with other members of the panel to help ensure that only the strongest and best-qualified individuals are appointed to critical state government positions.

She also serves on the Education and Judiciary committees.

As a member of the Education Committee, Representative Hovey is committed to maintaining and improving upon Connecticut's reputation for having one of the best school systems in the United States and to ensuring a quality education for all students.

Her background and experience as an education professional enable her to make significant contributions to the work of her committee.

Representative Hovey believes that the effectiveness of Connecticut's public school system is best demonstrated by the success of its students after they graduate.

To achieve that goal, she supports legislation to help students master basic skills and make practical use of them to ensure they succeed in their adult careers and become productive citizens.

Other important legislative priorities include reforming the state's Education Cost Sharing program to make it more equitable to suburban communities and increasing the state's share of the cost of special education to towns.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee, Representative Hovey supports legislation to enhance public safety in Connecticut's towns and cities and make the state a safer, more secure place to live, work and raise families.

She works closely with state Department of Transportation officials to ensure that projected improvements to Route 25 remain on schedule and are carefully designed to enhance traffic flow and safety, reduce traffic congestion and preserve the area's rural heritage and quality of life.

During the 2004 legislative session, Representative Hovey secured a commitment from the Connecticut Department of Transportation to conduct a study of traffic hazards on Route 111 in Monroe that could lead to improvements that would make the heavily traveled highway safer for school children, pedestrians and motorists.

Representative Hovey is actively involved in efforts to change the state's Affordable Housing statute to restore local control and reestablish the primacy of local land use regulations in decisions on affordable housing projects.

As an active member of the Fairfield County legislative delegation, Representative Hovey played a major role during the 2004 legislative session in securing additional funding for the purchase of more railcars for Metro North.

She cosponsored legislation (**Special Act 04-6**) authorizing the sale of \$25 million in state bonds, which, when combined with \$35 million in previously approved funding, enabled the Department of Transportation to proceed with the purchase of new railcars for Metro North and improve service for commuters who take the train to work.

Representative Hovey helped secure a variety of state grants for Monroe and Newtown during the 2004 and 2003 legislative sessions, including:

- A \$500,000 grant to help fund construction of an addition to the Monroe Police Department. The expansion project will enhance public safety and provide a more modern and secure workplace for police officers.
- A \$900,000 state Department of Environmental Protection Open Space grant to help Monroe enlarge Webb Mountain Park. The grant included \$450,000, for the purchase of 60.5 acres in the northeast section of town to enlarge the 135-acre Webb Mountain Park, and an additional \$450,000 to buy 107 acres of Webb Circle, providing a link to 322 acres of BHC watershed land.
- A \$1,312 grant for Fanfare Concerts Ltd., Inc., of Monroe, to provide operational support for the Baroque music group and its programs. Fanfare Concerts is dedicated to the research, publication, performance and recording of Baroque music composed prior to the 19th Century, much of which is available only in handwritten manuscripts that the group researches, transcribes, records, and performs for audiences in Connecticut and elsewhere in the United States.

- An additional \$2,500 grant for Fanfare Concerts to enable it to produce a musical program for fourth grade students at the Fawn Hollow Elementary School in Monroe.
- Law enforcement grants totaling \$4,000 each for Monroe and Newtown from the state's annual Federal Local Law Enforcement Block Grant. The money is made available from the federal Department of Justice and is provided to municipalities to reduce crime and improve public safety.

Representative Hovey cosponsored or supported several laws of importance to the 112th District that were enacted during the 2004 and 2003 legislative sessions. They were:

- **Public Act 04-174**, which allowed Connecticut residents to obtain health savings accounts. HSAs are tax-exempt personal savings accounts that enable those who open them to save money for future medical expenses.
- **P. A. 04-171**, which exempts local and state agencies from having to transcribe and preserve messages left on telephone answering machines - making it virtually impossible for the state Freedom of Information Commission to impose another mandate on state and local government. Preserving thousands of routine voice mail messages would have added major costs to local and state government and led to tax hikes.
- **P. A. 04-10**, which directed the Department of Social Services to evaluate the feasibility, health, safety and cost-effectiveness of re-importing prescription drugs from Canada under the ConnPACE Program as well as waiving the co-payment charge.
- **P. A. 04-169**, which made more Connecticut Veterans eligible for admission to the state Veterans' Home and Hospital. The act also increased the number of veterans eligible for burial in the state veterans' cemetery. It did so by eliminating war service as a criterion for admission or burial, enabling any veteran honorably discharged from active service in the U.S. Armed Forces to qualify.
- **P. A. 04-250**, which helped make our highways safer by authorizing the Department of Motor Vehicles to immediately suspend the licenses of motorists arrested for driving under the influence if their records show prior involvement in a fatal accident or a DUI conviction within the past 10 years.
- **P. A. 03-156**, which increased the penalties for identity theft, helped restore the credit-worthiness of victims and established safeguards to make it more difficult for criminals to obtain personal identification information.
- **P. A. 03-205**, which improves the security of single-family homes by preventing disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act of building plans for such dwellings to unauthorized persons.
- **P. A. 03-85**, which made all veterans who have 90 days of active duty service since August 2, 1990 eligible for state property tax, education and other benefits.

Previously, only veterans who had served during specific times of war were eligible for the benefits.

- **P. A. 03-33**, which requires the state's community-technical colleges, the Connecticut State University System, and the University of Connecticut to allow members of the armed services called into active duty during the school year to re-enroll in any course for which they paid tuition but did not complete because of their active duty status.
- **P. A. 03-78**, which gave Connecticut residents the option of choosing Medical Savings Accounts over conventional health insurance plans. Individuals and families who open MSAs can make annual tax-deductible contributions to their accounts. Interest earnings are tax-free as are funds withdrawn to pay for medical expenses.
- **P. A. 03-77**, which makes it easier for early retirees to continue their group health insurance from age 62 to 65, until they are eligible for Medicare.

Representative Hovey, a Special Education Consultant and child advocate, provides technical assistance and program designs to school districts, attorneys and private individuals. She evaluates children for learning strengths and weaknesses; provides advocacy for appropriate programming; and facilitates the development of inclusive systems and collaborative teaming. She also provides mediation for custody and family conflict resolution.

Representative Hovey is a member of the state Advisory Council for Special Education and serves on the Milford Rape Crisis Center's Board of Directors.

She is a member of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, Council for Exceptional Children, the Association of Educational and Psychological Consultants and the Endangered Lands Coalition.

She was the co-founder of CECDDL in New Hampshire and is listed in the Who's Who Registry of Rising Young Americans.

Representative Hovey, who was born in Houlton, Maine, was active in politics and civic groups in the state for several years.

She was a campaign fund-raiser for the Maine State Republican Senate; an event planner and fund-raiser for U.S. Senator Susan M. Collins; Maine Republican State Committee Woman; and Director of Finance for the Cumberland County Republican Committee.

She was the vice chairperson and chief negotiator for the Freeport School Board and a member of the Board of Directors of the Preble Street Resource Center for the Homeless. She also was active with the Junior League of Portland, Maine.

Representative Hovey serves on the Monroe Republican Town Committee. She is a volunteer for YMCA Camp Hi-rock and is active with the Junior League of Eastern Fairfield County.

She is a former member of the Monroe Historical Commission and the Monroe Inland Wetlands Commission.

Representative Hovey graduated from the University of Maine in 1976 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education of the Learning Disabled, K-12 and Elementary Education, K-8; and from the University of Southern Maine in 1988 with a Master of Science Degree in Exceptionality, concentration in Gifted Child Education and Education of the Learning Disabled.

She also trained at the University of Hawaii in 1981, in educational psychology, Curriculum for Young Gifted Children; at the University of Texas at Austin in 1990, as a Trainer of School Consultation; and at the SOI Insitute of Vida, Oregon, in 1997, where she became an Advanced Trainer in the Structure of Intellect Theory.

Representative Hovey is married to Paul J. Balsano, a Bridgeport firefighter. They have a blended family with her son Christopher, and his daughters Ashley and Jessica.